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A fearless advocate



Image: www.abc.net.au

Chair of Catholic Social Services Australia Dr Maria Harries AM today announced the appointment of Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO as Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services Australia.

“Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO is one of Australia’s leading advocates for justice and equity. His record on speaking out on behalf of people who have been ignored and disregarded in our community is unparalleled.

“From his earliest involvement in civil rights movements in Queensland, his work towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities in Redfern in 1975 through to the institution of the *Native Title Act* in 1993, his tireless advocacy on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers, and his contribution to the development of the Constitution for the people of Timor Leste among many other public achievements, Fr Brennan has held Australia to a consistent standard of upholding the rights, dignity and respect of all people, especially those most marginalised.

“Catholic Social Services Australia is delighted to appoint Fr Brennan as Chief Executive Officer, and we are very grateful that his Jesuit Provincial Fr Brian McCoy SJ has made him available to take up this position. I know that under his leadership people experiencing disadvantage and exclusion will have an effective, compassionate, and fearless advocate,” said Dr Harries.

Professor Brennan, a Jesuit priest, has held significant roles in academia, public policy and advocacy including:

- Professor of Law at Australian Catholic University
- Adjunct Professor at the ANU College of Law and National Centre for Indigenous Studies
- Founding director of Uniya, the Australian Jesuit Social Justice Centre
- Rapporteur at the Australian Reconciliation Convention
- Ambassador for Reconciliation by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation
- Chairperson to the Australian Government’s National Human Rights Consultation Committee
- Advocate in Residence for Catholic Health Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia and the St Vincent de Paul Society

Fr Brennan studied at the University of Queensland where he graduated with honours in arts and law. He then studied at the Melbourne College of Divinity where he graduated, again with honours, in divinity. He was awarded a Master of Laws as a result of further study at the University of Melbourne. Fr Brennan was later awarded, *honoris causa*, a Doctor of the



University from the Queensland University of Technology and a Doctor of Laws from the University of New South Wales.

He is an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for services to Aboriginal Australians, particularly as an advocate in the areas of law, social justice and reconciliation. Fr Brennan and Senator Pat Dodson shared the inaugural ACFOA Human Rights Award from the Australian Council for Overseas Aid.

While Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in East Timor, Fr Brennan was awarded the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal for his work in East Timor and the Australian Centenary Medal for his service with refugees and human rights work in the Asia Pacific Region. During the 1998 Wik debate, Prime Minister Paul Keating christened him the meddling priest. The National Trust has classified him as a Living National Treasure.

Catholic Social Services Australia, a work of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, is the Catholic Church's peak national body for social services in Australia. Catholic Social Services Australia represents a national network of 53 Catholic social service providers.

Our members have worked in local communities for over 60 years and currently operate in 650 locations across Australia, providing direct support to hundreds of thousands of people in need each year on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Our agencies provide a diverse range of support from assisting women and children escaping family violence, housing and homelessness support, to mental health and disability services. They also work in partnership with Indigenous people, and offer support and services to people seeking asylum and those who are refugees.

Media Contact:
Marcelle Mogg, 0400 576 917